

Behold, the Lamb of God!

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Pastor E. Keith Hassell

John 1:29 (NKJV) “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’

Jesus is the Lamb of God. Upon seeing Jesus walking by, John the Baptist announced, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Man has a sin problem. God has a Lamb!

People underestimate the offense and the consequences of sin. As a result they underestimate their need for a Savior. Sin is an offense to God. It is a blatant disregard for the holiness of God.

Sin has consequences. Although people are free to choose their sin, they are not free to choose the consequence of their sin. What are the consequences of sin? The particular consequences of sin in this life are too numerous to name. Sin affects every area of our lives. The final and ultimate consequence of sin is death—eternal separation from God and all that is good. (Romans 6:23)

Yes, man has a problem, but God has an answer! God’s answer for sin is the sacrifice of His own Son—Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. As the Lamb of God Jesus existed before the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8) At the right time in human history He was manifested in the flesh as the Lamb of God to die for our sins.

God’s provision of a lamb began in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:21 God provided skin coverings for Adam and Eve when they were found naked. God performed the first animal sacrifice as a substitute to cover the shame caused by sin. This animal is believed to have been a lamb.

In Genesis 4:4 the first recorded sacrifice by a human being was a lamb. It was the righteous Abel, son of Adam and Eve, who offered a lamb unto the LORD. Abel understood that it took blood to atone for his sin.

In Genesis 22:7-8 God tested Abraham by calling him to sacrifice his son Isaac. By faith Abraham obeyed. On the way to the place appointed by God, Isaac asked Abraham his father, “Where is the lamb?” Abraham responded, “God will provide for Himself a lamb!” God provided a substitute and Isaac was spared.

Probably the best known account is the Passover lamb in Exodus 12. In this chapter God instructed each family to set aside a lamb on the 10th day of Nisan. For four days they were to watch the lamb to make sure there was no spot or imperfection in it. On the 14th of Nisan at twilight, each family was instructed to kill the lamb and to apply the blood on the two doorposts and lintel of the home in order to escape the death angel’s judgment. Those who obeyed were spared.

In Exodus 29:38-39 God commanded a lamb to be offered each morning and evening at the tabernacle. It was to be a burnt offering to the Lord. Once again God prescribed a lamb.

One of the greatest Messianic passages in the Old Testament is found in Isaiah 53:1-7. Within this passage is the portrayal of the Messiah as a Lamb: “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.⁷ He was

oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." (Isaiah 53:4-7 NKJV) Jesus would fulfill this prophecy upon the Cross.

Ultimately the sacrifice of an animal could never take away sin: *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God."*" (Hebrews 10:4-7 NKJV)

God prepared His Son to be the Lamb to take away sins. In John 1:14 we find that Jesus, the Lamb of God, took on flesh. In Luke 2:7 we find that Jesus, the Lamb of God, was born in a stable and placed in a manger. In John 1:19 John the Baptist declared: *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* In Acts 8:32-35 Phillip preached Jesus as the Lamb of God to the Ethiopian eunuch from Isaiah 53. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul declared that Jesus, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.

Matthew's Gospel records four different occasions in which Jesus foretold of His coming mistreatment and death: Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:2. In preparation to become God's Passover Lamb who would take away the sins of the world, Jesus was subjected as a Lamb to the requirement of four days of testing as found in Exodus 12:3-5.

On the first day of the week, Sunday the 10th day of Nissan (on what has become known as "Palm Sunday" the Sunday before Easter), Jesus presented Himself to Jerusalem riding on a donkey accompanied by great fanfare and celebration. Upon entering Jerusalem, God allowed Jesus to be subjected to intense scrutiny in order to verify that He was the qualified Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

For the next four days, Jesus was tested by the religious and political leaders of Israel. The priests and elders tested Jesus regarding His authority. The Pharisees and Herodians tested Jesus regarding the need to pay taxes to Caesar. The Sadducees tested Jesus regarding the resurrection from the dead. The scribes tested Jesus regarding the greatest commandment in the law. After His arrest, Jesus was subjected to a series of intense interrogations. He was interrogated by Caiphas the high priest, the Sanhedrin, Pilate the Roman governor of Judea, and Herod the king. After leaving Herod, Jesus was sent back to Pilate who brought Him before the Jewish crowd and declared, "Behold the Man!" Unknowingly, the people chose Jesus as their Lamb saying, "Crucify Him!"

Yet Jesus was an innocent and faultless Lamb. Judas who betrayed Jesus returned the betrayal money and declared Jesus innocent. Following a tormenting dream, Pilate's wife warned her husband, "Have nothing to do with that just man!" Pilate returned to the people and declared: "I find no fault in Him!" Jesus had been approved as the spotless Lamb of God!

Jesus was crucified at 9 am, the time of the morning sacrifice. Prior to His death He declared, "It is finished!" Jesus died at 3 pm, the time of the evening sacrifice, the time when the priest came into the temple to offer prayers before the veil at the altar of incense before the veil. At that very moment, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom signifying that access to God's holy presence was now made possible. Through the ripping of the veil and the resurrection from the dead, God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus of our sins.

Jesus Christ the Lamb of God now resides with His Father in heaven. His role and sacrifice as the Lamb of God is still fresh before the throne. (Revelation 5:1-14) It is through the blood of the Lamb that the saints have victory over the devil. (Revelation 12:9-11) The offer of salvation is available to all because of the atoning work of the Lamb of God.

What will you do with God's Passover Lamb? As we approach the midnight hour of human history, it is important to be safely in God's house under the covering of the blood of Jesus. Those who are will be spared in judgment. In the end, the only real difference between the saved and the lost is faith and trust in the Lamb of God. So, what will you do with God's Lamb?

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Grace Fellowship
P.O. Box 260
Rusk, Texas
(903) 683-6550
www.gracefellowshiprusk.com